

Stamford School Readiness Council Meeting

Thursday, January 8, 2015

11:00 a.m.

William Pitt Child Development Center, 195 Hillandale Avenue

Council Members Present:

Lucia Cook	Program Manager for Literacy Volunteers at Family Centers
Karen Feder	Director of Youth Services/ Birth to Three Representative – Abilis
Sheila Glenn	ROSCCO Agency – After School Network
Polly O'Brien Morrow	Program Manager, Corporate Citizenship and Philanthropy
Erica Phillips	Director, All Our Kin
Dr. Polly Rauh	Board of Education
Ellen Reardon	Director, Stamford Museum and Nature Center Preschool
Michele Sabia	Former SPS Curriculum Associate for Early Childhood Education
Caroline Ward	Youth Services Coordinator, The Ferguson Library
Karen Wenz	Director, First Presbyterian Nursery School

Grant Recipients/Advisors/Guests:

Sonja Ahuja	William Casper Graustein Memorial Fund/ICOR Corp.
Donna Arcuri	School Readiness Liaison
Karen Brennan	Director, Stamford Early Childhood Collaborative
Jennifer DeRubies	Curriculum Associate, Early Childhood Education – SPS
Maria Fajardo	Parent, CLC William Pitt
Jorge Flores	Parent, CLC William Pitt
Maria Guico	Parent, CLC William Pitt
Marc Jaffe	Executive Director, CLC
Penny Lehman	Director of Program Services, CLC
Claudia Lopez	Parent, CLC William Pitt
Sindy Monroy	Parent, CLC William Pitt
Ramesh N	Parent, CLC William Pitt
Sue Rigano	SECC / Stamford Public Education Foundation
Carol Sargent	Director, State Funded Programs, CLC
Sherry Tarantino	Director, St. Clement Preschool
Nathalie Tocci	Care to Care Coordinator, Family Centers
Dori Walker	Instructional Coordinator
Anna Witkowski	Director of Child Day Care Programs, CLC

I. Welcome & Introductions

Polly Morrow welcomed everyone and opened the meeting by thanking our hosts CLC William Pitt. She then invited the group to introduce themselves and welcomed the parents who joined us.

II. Approval of Minutes from December 2014 Meeting

The Council unanimously approved the minutes from the December meeting.

III. School Readiness Provider Reports

Provider reports were sent in advance of the meeting and are included here as Attachments A, B, and C. Karen Brennan asked CLC what they feel the reason in the decline of enrollment in the part day program. Carol Sargent indicated more parents are looking for full day care. Since there is no work requirement for full day enrollment, parents seem to prefer full day over part day. Carol also indicated that many families interested in the part day program come to Stamford on work programs from other countries. They sometimes leave without notice to CLC. CLC is thinking of restructuring and/or decreasing some part day slots and converting those into full day slots once the construction is complete in the kindergarten wing. They may keep morning part day. The Council will be advised.

Donna asked Penny Lehman to discuss staffing issues. Penny explained they have six teacher openings to fill; however, they do have a Qualified Staff Member (QSM - State Qualified Credentialed Teacher) in each classroom. The open positions are for second teacher positions. People seeking jobs are generally more visible after the holidays.

Penny explained that hiring is becoming more difficult since CLC must meet the credential mandate that is going into effect on July 1, 2015. The new mandate requires that teachers receive their degrees from a regionally accredited university (i.e., an approved Connecticut college). There are very few at the four-year level and we here in Stamford have even less. UCONN is approved but it is a very small program. Candidates from a New York school can be hired if they go through the Early Childhood Teacher Credential process and go through the individual review route.

Beginning July 1, 2015 anyone already hired and in the Charters-a-Course registry will be grandfathered. However, 50% of newly hired teachers must have a bachelor degree or higher, the other 50% must have an Associate's degree with the Early Childhood Teaching Credential (ECTC). For example if someone graduated from Norwalk in 2009 they would not qualify for the ECTC. That candidate would need to go through the individual review process. It was very difficult and time consuming for current employees. CLC did it with their employees. The number of teachers that actually received the ECTC was very small.

Marc Jaffe commented that this process is time-consuming for the applicant and makes it difficult to maintain and hire candidates. Some good teachers may have to be demoted. He is hoping that our local senators will be of help to the programs and they will be sitting down with the Governor's staff and the Office of Early Childhood.

Michele Sabia asked if a candidate would be hireable if he or she has one of the three certifications from an unapproved college that would allow that person to teach in a public school and the answer is yes. Penny clarified that yes a State certified teacher could be hired from a four-year college even though it is not on the approved mandated list. She indicated that many of their candidates come from colleges in New York State.

Erica Phillips asked which piece is more onerous, the bachelor requirement or the credentialing requirement? Penny answered that the approved colleges is to her the most difficult piece. State funded programs are the only programs limited in hiring from approved colleges.

Michele suggested the Council come up with a plan to help teachers earn those credits. Marc disagreed. He feels the current requirement should be addressed and corrected. Although CLC will do what it must to prepare and train for the short term, he disagrees with the long term affects. Sue Rigano suggested we get in front of our legislators and testify as a group. Carol indicated CLC would like to eliminate the Early Childhood Teaching Credential not the requirement of the bachelor degree. They feel this puts State funded programs at a disadvantage in recruitment. Sherry Tarantino indicated she has not had a problem hiring teachers at St. Clement but may if one of her teachers leaves her. She has not had a hiring problem thus far. Polly suggested we organize a trip to the Capitol to discuss Stamford's concerns with this policy. An advocacy task force will be formed.

IV. School Readiness Liaison Update, Donna Arcuri

Donna thanked all of the parents for joining us and explained that the School Readiness Council is a state mandated council that is organized to administer School Readiness providers. We are looking to increase parent participation and hope parents will continue to join us. The School Readiness Council is charged with helping to prepare all of Stamford's preschool children to be educationally, socially, emotionally and healthy for kindergarten. We do this through professional development, community programming and parent education. Donna encouraged parents to come to our next School Readiness meeting to hear the monitoring report from Julie Coakley of CES that will detail the educational piece of the School Readiness program.

Donna reminded the Council and programs that they are required to report expenditures for family fees and subsidies to the Council each February 15th and August 15th. This is not a new requirement but since this is state mandated, we'll aim to improve our reporting process. Donna will email a reminder to the programs in early February and reports will be given to the Council in March.

Council members were asked for volunteers interested in a professional development brainstorming meeting. Our goal is to see if we can construct a series of professional development opportunities for all providers.

Donna reported that she and Karen will be meeting with the Stamford Preschool Director's Group on behalf of the SECC to hear their thoughts on professional development but also what are their thoughts regarding applying for the School Readiness grant.

It was reported that it is time for the Council to begin compiling information for the Unmet Need Report that is submitted to the Office of Early Childhood. Donna requested feedback from the Council surrounding any additional information that anyone felt would be prudent for Stamford to collect. For example Polly Rauh already suggested we ask how many students are English language learners. If anyone has anything to add, please contact Donna.

Michele Sabia asked if we would be using the information from the ED 159 that was suggested at a prior meeting. It was explained that we were still trying to get that information although she believes it is not complete since all programs are not required to fill it out. Carol Sargent reported that she has had difficulty entering the ED 159 and we would look into that. Ellen Reardon inquired why NAEYC was mandatory for private programs. She stated this is very challenging for part day programs and if we here in Stamford will have more slots available she wants us to understand that this is a barrier for many part day programs.

V. Policy Updates

Donna reported that we will be updating our local policies to align with recent changes on the state level and also to unify all the programs in their enrollment and payment procedures.

Items that will be addressed in the updates: program staff qualifications, professional development, toileting, fee calculation, provider communication, preference to working families, hardship policy which includes forms for scholarship. In addition to these items, she will be restating the policy that teachers should NOT be collecting fees. This should be done by a staff member who is not part of the classroom staff.

VI. Stamford Early Childhood Collaborative Update, Karen Brennan

Karen Brennan reported that the SECC held a very successful Lunch and Learn at the Ferguson Library Harry Bennett Branch in December. We connected with many people who were formally in our working groups and had a lot of new people come to the table. As a result the SECC has been invited to many different organizations such as the Stamford Youth Bureau and the Stamford Preschool Director's Group, for example.

VII. Announcements

Carol Sargent announced they would hold their Kindergarten Night on January 13th at 7:30 for families with children entering kindergarten next September.

Lucia Cook reported that she will be distributing flyers from Literacy Volunteers regarding ESL classes.

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at noon.

**The next Council meeting will be held on
Thursday, February 12th at 9:30 a.m. at Family Centers.**

Addendum A:



Stamford Public Schools School Readiness Classroom Report

December 2014

- **Program Utilization**
 - a. Authorized Capacity: 15 School Day, School Year slots
 - b. Ages: 4 year olds
 - c. Students with disabilities: 1 child with special needs
- **Program Attendance:**
 - a. Illness: Attendance was consistent this month.
 - b. Notes and trends:
- **Staffing:**
 - a. Staffing is in place.
- **Training:**
 - a. Continued NAEYC training with standards and partnership with Instructional coordinators
- **Special Events/Activities:**
 - a. Parent Teacher Conferences (3 days)-100% attendance
 - b. Report Cards Distributed
 - c. Ferguson Library Bookmobile visited
 - d. Students continue to participate in weekly enrichment activities including programs from Bartlett Arboretum, Bricks and Motors, Yoga and Animal Embassy,
 - e. Students participated in classroom Parent Experiences:
 - f. Family Holiday Celebration- Friendship/Giving Theme

Addendum B:

School Readiness Report Childcare Learning Centers, Inc.

December, 2014

- Program Utilization
 - a. Authorized Capacity – 374 – Full Day; 97 – Part Day; 60- Extended Day= 531
 - b. Attended – 524
 - c. Ages – 245- 3 year olds, 279 - 4 year olds, 0 - 5 year olds
 - d. Children with disabilities - 15 with LEA- IEP; 2 without LEA-IEP
 - e. Notes and Trends: Down 2 Part Day slots and 5 Full Day at Lathon Wider.
We are noticing a decline of families interested in Part Day.
- Program Attendance:
 - a. 99%of enrollment
 - b. Notes and trends:
- Staffing
 - Open Positions-
 - a. Cluster A – Assistant Teacher
 - b. Cluster A - 2 Teachers
 - c. Lathon Wider- Head Teacher
 - d. New Lathon Wider classroom – Head Teacher, Teacher, and Assistant Teacher
 - c. Recruitment – ads on-line, local newspapers, postings at NCC.
- Training:
 - a. ELD's – Cognitive Strand – Julie Coakley and Suzanne Clement – December 3, 2014
 - b. Yale/Ruler – December 2, 2014
- Special Events/Activities:
 - Teachers are preparing lesson plans based on the Preschool Curriculum Standards and the individual needs of the children.
 - Yale Ruler – Teacher Appreciation Breakfast – December 15
 - Parent/Teacher conferences – throughout the month
 - Scholastic Book Fair – December 8-12, 2014
 - Lunch and Learn – “Challenging Behaviors” – Child Guidance – December 19, 2014.
 - Cluster B – Sound Waters, December 10 – 19, 2014.
 - “ Come Visit with Me – Gingerbread Cookies” – December 19, 2014
 - Bookmobile – December 3, 2014
 - Music and Movement with Fiona Angelov – every Tuesday and Thursday
 - Bruce Museum field trips throughout the month
 - Parent Advisory Council – meeting December 17, 2014

Addendum C: St. Clements Monthly Report, December 2014

St. Clement Preschool

December – 2014

Program Utilization:

- School Day – School Year – 43 Students to date
- Pre – K 3 Class – 17
- Pre – K 4 Class #1-13
- Pre – K 4 Class #2-13
- All 31 School Readiness slots are taken.
- Continuing tours each day. Currently looking for Pre-K 4 students and possibly 1 Pre-K 3 student.
- Starting our enrollment for next year – 2015-2016

Attendance:

- a. 85% attendance. A few children have stomach flu, cold flu, asthma issues, ear infections, colds with fever.

Staffing:

- We are fully staffed! 3 Head Teacher's, 3 Teacher Assistant's
- 90% attendance – A few teachers have used their Personal days.

Activities & Events:

- b. Lifetouch Studios Photos have been received and distributed to our parents. We do make a percentage of the amount sold. To be determined.
- c. SCP hosted children & staff hosted a Holiday Celebration for families. This program included poems, songs and finger plays. We then hosted and Cookie & Juice Reception for the families!!
- d. SCP Staff members were treated to a Holiday Luncheon at Zody's 19th Hole. Staff participated in Secret Santa gift trade and it was wonderful to relax and enjoy each other's company outside of the school.
- e. The Ferguson Bookmobile now stops here each Tuesday morning at 9:30am. The bookmobile librarian hosts each classroom reading a story, singing songs and finger plays.
- f. SCP ended December with "Building & Creating a Family Gingerbread House". SCP Staff invited each family to come into each classroom to participate with their child. This event was a great success and many, many families came into create these awesome Gingerbread Houses. There was a lot of candy eating also....."one for me....one for the house!"